

THE CORRESPONDENT.

MAGNA EST VERITAS ET PREVALEBIT.

BY GEORGE HOUSTON, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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CORRESPONDENCE.

THE SOUL.

Mr. Editor.—The following remarks, from the “*Republican*,” in which the faculties of the horse are so ingeniously contrasted with those of our species, may, perhaps, be deserving of the consideration of those of your readers who still cling to the idea that man possesses a soul, distinct from his body; and that this, and not his more perfect organization, gives him a superiority over other animals:—

My horse reasons: he knew nothing until he was taught: His mind or brain was a *Tabula rasa*. He knows the difference between right and wrong—pleasure and pain. If two roads present, he will take the shortest to his stable; because the shortest will bring him to the place most agreeable to him. He possesses those great properties which constitute the human mind—sensation, understanding, memory. I never heard of a horse being an *idiot*. They are all capable of education: they are all capable of a degree of improvement which none have ever attained. The organization of the horse differs from man: each have capacities and excellencies peculiar to themselves. I excel my horse in the usefulness of my hands and tongue; but he excels me in the acuteness of his smell and his hearing. Horses are gregarious as well as men: they are a social animal, and have a physiognomy that expresses many of their passions and reflections.

I have constantly noticed similar moral effects in the horse as in the human subject, arising from physical causes. They are similarly acted upon by similar agents; the only difference is in degree, and that difference arises from the different organization of the two animals, sometimes exceeding in one, and sometimes in the other. The mind of man and the mind of the horse are subject to the influence of diet. If both are kept on low diet, there will be a corresponding mental depression, passiveness and obedience; if both are kept well, spirit and gaiety is the effect. This proves that the organization of both is similarly acted upon by similar stimulus, and that the passions or ideas of both are acted upon by causes that act upon the organization. The mind of the man and of the horse are made up of material agents; both minds are built up out of physical actions; they are combined from material causes; the minds of both are improved by practice, as the legs are improved in agility by

the dancing master, or the arms by the pugilist. The legs do not think, because it is not compatible with their organization; neither does the brain run; because that sort of motion is not according to its constitution. It is the province of one part to perform one office, and another part another.

Nobody talks about the immaterial motion of the hand; but if they did, the idea would be destroyed by dividing the brachial nerve, so that immateriality would be seen to be in the nerve. The case is exactly similar with the head, the heart, and any part of the body; they are all just as immaterial as the hand. To say that any part of the body is moved by an immaterial principle, is absurd, because it is tantamount to saying that nothing can move something, or that nothing and something are the same; which is foolish and untrue. In me and my horse all these physiological facts coincide; it is unnecessary to enter into a minute comparison of what must be self evident to every one. The horse and the man are well known to be capable of the passions of love and hatred, revenge and friendship. He has a tenacious memory, and is fond of music and hunting; and if he had the organ of speech, oftentimes would he make his rider blush with his good lash and reflection. The voice of the horse is entirely guttural, which precludes the possibility of his ever acquiring the faculty of speech. The knowledge of the horse is not only increased by experience, but, without practice, is subject to decay: and old age in each destroys the faculty of thought. A horse is acted upon by all the agents that act upon me. He is subject to similar diseases that admit of similar treatment; to inflammation, to spasms, and obstructions. He is similarly influenced by heat and cold; refreshed by rest, and exhausted by exertion. Chemistry has detected no difference between the blood of the horse and the rider; the same properties are common to both.

The horse has a smaller quantity of brain than man; a fact that would lead us to presume that if he had had the faculty of speech, he never could have arrived at the perfection in the sciences some men have attained; but yet it is quite possible that by education he would have excelled many that claim the privilege of being his master, and put him to shame. There can be no doubt that the horse combines his ideas, or that there is a regular and connected succession of thoughts in his mind relating to the same point. A horse knows the consequence of a proper or a wrong action when he has been corrected for a fault. He shows that he knows the consequence by his alarm. Doubtless he reflects upon and compares his experience. It is only the fact I contend for in opposition to the soul-mongers. I do not enter into the extent of the metaphysical qualities of the horse; that is a question not determinable; but I only show that they exist; that they are in extent much according to the experience of the horse, his education, and the strength of the organization of the cranial members; by cranial members I mean all those convolutions, fissures, and protuberances of the brain.

My only object in committing this to paper is to prove that the horse is not the brute he is represented. If he has not vocal organs, he has feelings. He hears, and sees, and reflects, and has sensible nerves as well as man; and that the one is quite as material a person as the other.

If it can be proved that one has a soul, I will admit the other has ; but for my part, I can discover no other than a material rise and decay. The only difference between a man and a horse, is a trifling arrangement or distribution of matter, depending on one of the elementary laws of matter. It is quite as difficult to account for the origin of the first horse, as of the first man ; they have arisen, like a cheese mite, from a peculiar combination of matter placed under specific circumstances. I explain by the term specific, such as uniform heat to an egg, and such of cold. An animal is produced by a combination of male and female matter ; in this there is nothing spiritual, and any body may believe it better than that something can be made out of nothing. I may be absurd ; but the Christians believe in a succession of absurdities ; and it is quite as reasonable in me to claim belief in the rational powers of the horse, as for them to require me to believe that I shall *live after I am dead*, except in a fresh organization of matter.

The soul-jobbers, in one respect, always appear to be in a difficulty. How do they ascertain the properties of the soul in the idiot, the insane, or in those animals that approximate as near to the lower orders as those to the highest order of man ? If the soul is the organ of sense, or the intellectual faculty, the idiot, or the insane, cannot have a soul. If they have not a soul, the soul-mongers must decide that men are brutes, if without intellect. If they make the soul and intellect the same thing, they must be in a dilemma ; but the intellect is a matter of creation, and if the intellect and soul are the same thing, the soul must be created. If this were the case, infants have no soul, and when idiocy supervenes, the soul must either depart the body for hell, many years before death, or it must be something different from mind.

What becomes of the soul when the function of the mind is suspended by a fractured head, or hydrocephalus, or during delirium ? If mind and soul are the same thing, the soul is material, or depends on the organs of the head ; and if it is material, it must have always existed ; and if it has always existed, it could not have been created in any given person ; and if it is matter it must always exist. It is different from mind, because mind does not always exist. As there is nothing separate from matter, and as mind is only the function of matter, it will cease with the peculiar conformation of matter that may now constitute the brain. If a black man has less intellectual power than a white one, he must have a smaller soul ; and even the white man that has a great mind, must have a greater soul than the simpleton. I do not know whether theologists have reflected on this ; but if they had, I suppose they would be too shrewd to divulge their opinions ; they never circulate any thing likely to injure their trade in "Loaves and Fishes." It would be a ridiculous thing to send the soul to hell if it was not accompanied by all those acute feelings, sensations, and reflections, that accompany perfect health. Motion and matter accounts for all the phenomena that characterise the mind. What appears to be so obscure and unintelligible in the human mind, admits of natural explanation. There are many things inexplicable in the present state of our knowledge ; but their being so proves nothing more than our ignorance ; and no doubt many things will in time be explained, and appear simple, that are now abstruse and com-

plex. Some ingenious anatomist may one day discover a mode of removing the skull so as not to injure the functions of the brain. However difficult such a task may be, until it is performed the evolutions of matter alluded to cannot be demonstrated. The mind is as mechanical as the hand. Both are moved by those laws common to animal matter. The laws of animal matter and those of vegetable and other matter are only different in consequence of their elementary agents. The same combinations in both produce similar effects in both. If the organization of the white man's head is more perfect than that of the black man, greater intellectual improvements may be effected in one than in the other. And in instances of idiots and simple people, there is either malformation of the head, or organic disease. There is not that arrangement, that tone, or elasticity in one as in the other: but this may be known from analogy in the motion of the feet or the hands, the formation of which is cultivated and preserved by experience. These members can do nothing but what they are taught any more than the brain; both are the creatures of experience. I have not taken into account the difference of organization, as the structure of the head or the feet enables one person to attain a greater degree of improvement than another. The most efficient organization, and the greatest effort to improve, can only arrive at the highest attainment.

REGULATOR.

THE CRUCIFIXION, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION.

BY JOHN HOLLIS.

Concluded from page 380.

It is somewhat surprising that John, the most intimate with Jesus of the four evangelists, has not been more particular respecting the circumstances which attended the resurrection of his friend and master, but it seems that Jesus was very cautious in trusting his disciples with any secrets, and indeed, this surprise is somewhat lessened on remarking, that out of twelve Judas Iscariot had betrayed, and Peter had disowned him;* he seems only to have put his more secret confidence in Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, who being far beyond the rest in knowledge, in their situation in life, and in the means of assisting him, were the better entitled to it, for the disciples did not expect he would rise again, and they only saw him after his recovery. A miracle so great as the resurrection of a divine person, must necessarily be accompanied by something equally as miraculous; an event that is supernatural must be

* When pope Urban appointed a select committee to examine accounts and errors passed in the lives of his predecessors, there happened to be two statues opposite to each other upon a bridge, the one of St. Peter, the other of St. Paul, when some sly wag put a pair of spurs upon St. Peter's heels; and St. Paul asking him whither he was bound, he answered, I apprehend some danger to stay now in Rome, because of this new committee, for I fear they will question me for denying my master. Truly, brother Peter, said Paul, I shall not be long after thee, for I have great cause to expect they will question me for persecuting the Christians before I was converted.

brought about by supernatural means, otherwise it would lose in the estimation of its believers, and this was the case here. Nothing else than the appearance of angels could perform so arduous a task ; it was necessary to break open the sealed door of the sepulchre ; it was necessary to knock down those who watched ; and all this was brought about. For according to Matthew, "the angel of the lord rolled back the stone, and the keepers from fear became as dead men." (Matth. ch. xxviii, v. 2, 4) The apostle John informs us, that early on Sunday morning (the first day of the week) when it was yet dark, comes Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre, and sees the stone taken away from it, and this causes a terrible bustle ; Mary runs immediately to Peter and to John ; these two disciples then run together, but John outruns Peter, and arrives the first at the sepulchre, and, behold ! they found it void. John, however, went into the sepulchre and saw and believed, for as yet they knew not the scripture that Jesus must rise again from the dead.* (John, ch. xx. v. 9) They then returned home again. Now come the angels. Mary who stood without, weeping, upon looking into the sepulchre, sees two angels sitting in white, the one at the head, the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. She, on turning herself back, saw him, but took him to be the gardener. Jesus having convinced her of her mistake, sends her to acquaint his disciples with what she had seen.

The other evangelists relate their story somewhat differently.—According to Matthew, Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre with the mother of Jesus at the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, and the angel sat upon the stone which he had rolled back. "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow." And the angel told her to go immediately and tell the disciples ; and as they were going they met Jesus, who desired him likewise to tell his brethren, and to go into Galilee where they should see him. Mark relates, that those two women saw a young man sitting in the sepulchre in a long white garment, who told them to do as Matthew's angel had told them, but the disciples, although they had heard of his being alive, and had even been seen by her, believed not. Luke's report is, that when they had entered into the sepulchre, they beheld two men standing by them in shining garments, and they told the apostles, "but their words were as idle tales." Peter, however, went to the sepulchre, wondered at what was come to pass, and departed.

Jesus, after his resurrection, therefore, appeared first to Mary Magdalene and the other women ; one apostle says they met him ; another does not say whether they did or did not ; and John, the most reasonable of them all, that she was alone at the sepulchre, and took him for the gardener : with respect to the angels, that the women, who it seems were sensibly frightened, might imagine they saw something, and more particularly at that time of the morning, (for it was yet dark) and in an age when angels were appearing every day, is not to be wondered at ; or

* It is very doubtful if Jesus said before his supposed death, that he should rise again the third day, for his disciples must certainly have known of it. It appears, however, that as they knew nothing about his resurrection, this prophecy must have been fabricated afterwards.

that Mary Magdalene might have taken a young man for an angel ; but we can give little credit to her as a witness, for according to Luke, she had lately imagined herself to have been possessed by seven devils. (Luke, ch. viii, v. 2) As to the two disciples who went to the sepulchre, they neither saw Jesus nor the angels ; and which is the most probable part of the history ? It will not be improper here to compare the prophecy which Jesus had made concerning his rising again with what had happened, for as the resurrection may be looked upon as perhaps the most extraordinary miracle in the history of Christ, it may be expected the prophecy would have been the most religiously fulfilled.

We are informed by Matthew, who mentions it in two places, that when certain of the scribes and Pharisees asked of Jesus a sign by which they might believe in him ; his answer was, there should be none given to an evil and adulterous generation, except the sign of the prophet Jonas. " For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matth. ch. xii, v. 40, and ch. xvi, v. 4) Nothing can be more plain and explicit than this prophecy, and yet not a word of it came to pass ; for supposing Jesus to have been buried on Friday evening, at 9 o'clock, and to have just risen when Mary saw him on the Sunday morning following, at day break, he could then have lain in the ground but about twenty-eight hours, at farthest. Suppose we leave these assertions of Matthew out of the question, and put the other, that Christ said he should rise the third day, we have no witness to prove that to have been the case. When the two Marys, according to Matthew, came "*in the end of the sabbath*," towards the first day of the week, to see the sepulchre, the angel who sat upon the stone told them, he was not there, but *already risen*, and they met Jesus as they went to tell his disciples. (Matth. ch. xxviii, v. 1, 6) But he might have arisen from the dead a long time before, for any thing they knew to the contrary. It is impossible to prove, therefore, that Christ arose the third day after his burial, or that his prophecy was fulfilled ; the witnesses only proving, that he *was* arisen ; and all the apostles agree it was very early in the morning when the women arrived at the sepulchre.

I have previously observed, from the testimony of the apostles themselves, that they did not know Christ was to rise again from the dead, (John, ch. xx, v. 9) and that when the women told them, they were only looked upon as idle tales. (Luke, ch. xxiv, v. 11) Their disbelief went still farther. According to Mark, when Jesus had appeared to two of his disciples, as they were walking into the country, the rest, when they were told of it, would not believe. After this he appeared to the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them for their incredulity and hardness of heart. Matthew tells us, when they saw Jesus on the mountain in Galilee, where he had appointed to meet them, some still doubted ; (Matth. ch. xxviii, v. 17) and from Luke we learn, that when he appeared to the eleven at Jerusalem, they were terrified and affrighted, supposing him to be a ghost, until he convinced them that he was composed of flesh and bones, (Luke, ch. xxiv, v. 36) and even then they only wondered, and did not believe. The incredulity of Thomas was still greater ; he would not believe until he had thrust his finger into his side.

If therefore it was necessary to take all this pains to make the disciples believe in Christ, and in his resurrection, how are we to believe after a lapse of eighteen centuries?

Forty days after the resurrection, (Acts, ch. i, v. 3) and after he had appeared several times to his disciples, we are informed of another miracle, nearly as strange as the last: his ascension into heaven.—Nothing can be more discordant here than the accounts of the evangelists: one tells us that the disciples met Jesus in Galilee, according to his orders, when he gave them his last commission to teach all nations (Math. ch. xxviii, v. 16, 17.) Another, that he *led* them from Jerusalem into Bethany, where he was received into heaven. (Luke ch. xxiv, v. 39, 50, 51) A third, that he disappeared from them at supper, and ascended. (Mark. ch. xvi, v. 12, 14, 19) Luke, in his history of the apostles, states that he was taken up by a cloud; and John says nothing about the matter. Suppose such witnesses as these were to appear now-a-days before twelve honest jurymen, and make such a bungling evidence, what could they expect but to be hissed out of court?

Before I leave this part of the subject, I cannot forbear taking notice of some expressions in the gospel of St. Mark, which are attributed to Jesus, just before his ascension. He tells his disciples to go and preach the gospel to the whole world. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned," it is said, were his expressions; he was then received into heaven,* where he sat on the right hand of God.

Just heaven! how could'st thou receive into thy bosom a creature who entered into thy presence with persecution upon his tongue, and pronounced the damnation of man for not believing impossibilities? I do not think these cruel and barbarous words ever came from the mouth of Jesus; they have too much the spirit of priesthood ever to make me believe that Jesus would sully a life devoted to humanity by such, his last expressions. They must have been the pious interpolations of some reverend father, or some holy saint, and not the assertions of an honest man.

CREATION—DEITY.

Mr. Editor—As one of your subscribers, I am inclined, through the medium of your paper, to submit a few remarks by way of reply to the communication of E. L. Jr. Although one or two gentlemen have already pretended to answer his questions, yet the subject of his inquiry seems to have been of so much wonder and research, I think it no harm to give our opinions on a subject which seems to some so very important.

Our opinions (I presume it will not be disputed) are formed from the evidence we receive from the condition and circumstances of our lives; therefore, however widely the opinions of others may differ from our

* Paul, in his epistle to the Corinthians, says that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Heaven: (Corinth. ch. xv, v. 50) What became of the natural body of Jesus?

own, if sincere, ought not to be ridiculed. But to proceed. In regard to the subject of E. L. Jr.'s inquiry, I fully agree with him in regard to the existence of a supreme intelligence, or superintending providence, though I cannot comprehend such a being. The evidence of design, the order and regularity in the progression of the parts which compose the universe, are a sufficient demonstration of the fact, in my opinion; but I shall not presume to despise or ridicule those who think otherwise. And, moreover, I do not think it necessary or expedient to use any forcible argument with a view to convince mankind that there is no future state of existence, if any think they have an evidence of such a thing; and if it is any consolation to them, surely I would not wish to deprive them of that consolation. When I perceive people pretending to believe in things which in effect will injure them or their fellow beings, I think it a duty to endeavour to convince them of the error of continuing in them; but am inclined to think that neither of the above have that effect.

In regard to the last point of the subject of the communication of E. L. Jr., it is a fact that no man can know for a certainty the manner of his origin; or how this earth was first peopled. But from attentive observation, analogy, and research, the intelligent mind may draw reasonable conclusions. In proceeding in this inquiry, in the first place, I have every reason to believe matter to be eternal; and that the earth we inhabit, and the materials of which man is formed, existed from all eternity, in some form or other; but yet have no evidence to believe that the inhabitants of this earth, or the human species in their present form, existed from all eternity. The question then occurs, how was it first peopled?

In viewing our earth we see it is now inhabited by human beings; in viewing the other planets, or stars, from our astronomical observation we have reason to think they are, or many of them, inhabited by beings equal, if not superior to us. Then returning back to our earth, we may perceive that many of the particles of this earth are also inhabited by species of insects as well as the globes which compose the universe. Even vegetation, the leaves of trees, animals, &c., are all at times inhabited by insects, vermin, or reptiles. And from observing we may perceive that these particles, or appendages of our earth, are sometimes without these inhabitants; in consequence (as we have reason to suppose) of the revolutions of nature, or changes of temperature. Then again we may perceive them to be reoccupied. Then turning again to take a general view of our earth, there is reason to believe, from the appearance of its surface, that from similar causes there has been a time, if not times, when the whole earth has been without inhabitants; and again repeopled by the same laws by which it is sustained; in confirmation of which I will bring into view one instance that passed within my own knowledge, and that is of a particle, or an appendage of this world, which is considered of some importance in the scale of particles that were without the inhabitants which sometimes occupy such particles. I caused it to be kept in a uniform blood-heat for six weeks; then, upon examination, I found an egg rather larger than in the natural procreation of such insects. I allowed it to remain three or four weeks, and the par-

ticle was completely furnished with inhabitants, male and female, such as it was competent to sustain. From which circumstance I have strong reasons to believe that if this earth should be deprived of its present inhabitants, when it resumed a temperature and qualifications proper to sustain inhabitants, it would be repeopled by the same laws which now perpetuate and sustain the present. But still this theory does not in the least exclude the necessity nor evidence of the existence of a superintending providence; but adds still more to his greatness and perfection. The question may occur, that if this is or was the manner in which worlds are peopled, why do we not repeatedly see them come forth in the same way? Because the case is plain, that this original creative power is absorbed in that propensity which the species have to propagate their kind.

OBSERVER.

NEW-YORK, SATURDAY, JANUARY 3, 1829.

Reaction.—We were not aware, when we published, in our last, the resolutions of the meeting at Rochester, respecting the conveyance of the United States mail on Sunday, that the attempt to induce the postmaster-general to innovate on a long established and salutary usage, had been so universally reprobated, as we now find it was—We stated that the proprietors of the “Pioneer Line” had endeavored to supplant the present contractors by hypocritical representations, in which, however, they had failed—“The postmaster (says a correspondent at Lockport) has reserved to himself the right of stopping the mail on the first day of the week, provided a majority of the business men in this section of the country are in favor of having it so. Meetings have been held in Rochester, Lockport, and Lewiston; and the people have *unanimously* resolved that they want the mail *every day of the week*.”

Our readers are already in possession of the report of the proceedings at Rochester. The following is an account of the expression of public opinion at Lockport, and Lewiston, extracted from the “Rochester Daily Advertiser”:

At Lockport, George H. Boughton, the senator elect, was chairman, and Asa H. Douglass secretary of the meeting. At Lewiston, Robert Fleming, formerly senator, was chairman, and Wm. F. Hotchkiss, secretary. The resolutions of both meetings pointedly condemn the attempt of a certain person or persons to impose on the postmaster-general the belief that the generality of our business men were opposed to the carriage of the mail more than six days in the week.

The Lewiston meeting resolved that “they have been unable to discover any good reason why the mail should not run seven times per week, as at present. The public stages are not, and cannot be prohibited by law from running every day of the week, and the committee are of opinion that carrying the mail every day, does not increase the evil, (if it be an evil) but “adds greatly to the convenience of the business public.”

At Lockport, the meeting determined that the “great and frequently sudden fluctuations of our market, and particularly on the produce of the country, render it indispensable to the interests of the country, that we have direct and daily communications with the cities upon which we

depend for our market; and that instances *have occurred during the present season*, in which the detention of the mail for one day would have proved very detrimental to the interests of our citizens."

The *religious* papers—or at least certain papers which arrogate to themselves that title—"at one fell swoop," pronounce all who are opposed to stopping the mail on Sunday, to be *infidels*! If so, there is a goodly company of them.

Clerical trickery.—Our correspondent at Utica, writes as follows, on the 22d inst.:—"The agent of the American Tract Society is now in town, preaching, and will probably succeed in sheering the pious of considerable money, by telling long stories on the importance of tracts. He said that one of the girls employed in folding them, in the tract house, became so convinced of her unworthiness to be engaged in such holy business that she was on the point of leaving the establishment, when she was graciously visited by the holy spirit, and was so far sanctified as to be thought worthy of pursuing her holy calling.—He told a number of stories equally absurd, in order to enlist their feelings in his behalf. In speaking of the power of the press, he deplored in significant terms the unrestrained liberty it enjoyed by the present constitution, which enabled infidels to avail themselves of its power; he said a great deal about the valley of the Mississippi, of the political power it would one day have, and of the importance of christianizing them; which taken in connexion with what has been printed in the "Western Recorder" from time to time, induces me to think that the New-Harmony establishment operates as a thorn in their side, in that quarter. His text was, "for he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet;" and he talked with considerable earnestness *I assure you.*"

TO OUR PATRONS.

As we are now approaching the third year of our editorial labours, we hope it will not be deemed intrusive if we should remind our patrons of the necessity of being punctual in fulfilling their engagements. Our receipts do not yet exceed the expenditure of our establishment, though we have every reason to believe that the period is not far distant when the amount of our subscriptions will afford us some renumeration for our exertions.

The difficulties we have had to encounter in the management of a journal so unpopular as ours is, can only be imagined by those who have been placed in a similar situation. But amidst all that we have suffered through the machinations of the superstitionists—notwithstanding hope itself has sometimes become extinct, from the inadequacy of our pecuniary means, we have never entertained the idea of abandoning our post—never, for a single moment, felt a disposition to relax in our efforts to burst the fetters by which an arrogant and unprincipled priesthood has contrived to subjugate the human mind. And if our friends show, by their promptness in paying their subscriptions, that they are

actuated by the same zeal which has led us, at all risks, to brave the fury of these spiritual tyrants, we entertain no doubt of being able to render their present pernicious influence completely abortive.

It is known that the terms on which we publish the *Correspondent* are for country subscribers to pay *one year's* subscription, and for those residing in town, *six months* subscription, *in advance*, besides postage. Unless these terms are complied with, it must be evident that more is required of us than is just. We now devote our time and talents *gratuitously* to the cause; the least, therefore, that can be expected from those who feel interested in our prosperity, is to supply the means, which, by their engagement, they are bound to furnish, in order to enable us to proceed without embarrassment. We should regret to be compelled to *discontinue* sending our paper to any of our subscribers; but this will be unavoidable if they should appear indifferent as to its success.

MISCELLANEOUS.

The Edinburgh Zetetic Society's Shorter Catechism.

Continued from page 386.

Question. What practice do you allude to as opposed to our ideas of wisdom?

Answer. The practice of altering the laws of nature on the most trivial occasions, and of bringing forward miracles which cannot be believed, in support of truths which cannot be doubted.

Q. What do you allude to as opposed to our ideas of goodness?

A. We are told that God approved of the treacherous assassination of Sisera, and that Moses had divine authority for spoiling a neighbouring nation, and for murdering all the women and infants, except a portion of the female children, who were set aside for the use of his countrymen. Such transactions are so directly opposed to our ideas of right and wrong, and to the unchangeable nature of the power that governs the universe, that it is scarcely credible that they ever met with divine approbation.

Q. What do you allude to as opposed to our ideas of greatness?

A. The descriptions which represent the great governing power of the universe as subject to the passions and prejudices which are peculiar to human nature—as walking in a garden, or dwelling in a bush—clothed (in the human imagination) with all the organs and dimensions of the human figure.

Q. But are not such descriptions evidently intended to be altogether metaphorical?

A. The literal interpretation of such descriptions is so grossly absurd that no individual, who reflects at all, can be deceived by them. But children, who are unaccustomed to reflection, generally receive them in their literal sense; and it is known that the natural tendency of such doctrines is to destroy the human intellect, and to make a great portion

of mankind continue in a state of imbecility and childhood during their whole lives.

Q. Are mankind not highly culpable for impressing such notions on the minds of their helpless children ?

A. If their own notions were true, they should then, indeed, be highly culpable, for it is a part of their doctrine, *that man has power over the formation of his own way of thinking*. But seeing that every rational being has within himself the most conclusive testimony that no such power exists, it necessarily follows that such individuals, as they act from the best intentions, are in no degree culpable, though they are much to be pitied.

Q. Why are they to be pitied ?

A. Because, by the unspeakable wisdom of the laws which govern our nature ; it is so ordained that a human being cannot act wrong without entailing misery on himself ; and the inconvenience which these individuals suffer from their adherence to error, is the punishment which nature inflicts upon those who deviate from the dictates of reason and of common sense.

Q. But would it not be more painful for these individuals to act otherwise ?

A. There cannot be a shadow of doubt but that is the case ; because the desire of happiness is the chief motive to all human actions ; and these individuals act thus irrationally, merely because false impressions have been made upon their minds, which would make it more painful for them to act otherwise ; and it is upon this account, that they are so much to be pitied.

Q. How can we distinguish the restraints which are congenial to the laws which govern our nature from those that are of a different description ?

A. The natural consequences which attend the use of these restraints furnish the only criterion which has been equally respected by all nations, and in all ages ; and no rule for distinguishing good from evil can be more plain or simple.

Q. Do the doctrines of atheists or unbelievers teach us to despise or disregard the laws which govern our nature ?

A. The truth and utility of these laws are so self-evident that no human being can openly reject or despise them. They teach us "that every thing which has a tendency to promote the general welfare and happiness of man throughout the period of his existence, is good." And "every thing that produces a prepondering share of misery or suffering to the human race, is evil ;" and that it is our duty to do the one, and to avoid the other.

Q. How do you know that these are the laws which govern our nature ?

A. Because they have remained the same in all ages and countries ; and because they form the criterion by which each nation judges the proceedings of all other nations. Though each nation invariably considers its own proceedings as an exception from this rule. Because impressions have been made in infancy upon the minds of the natives, which impressions produce actions that will not bear to be judged

by this criterion. If their minds had been free, they would have been willing to respect and obey the laws which govern their nature, and to have followed the truth, wherever it might lead.

Q. What is truth ?

A. Truth is simply an account or description of any thing, which account or description exactly corresponds with the reality. Though the word 'truth' embraces every thing that is true, and, consequently, can only be of one kind, yet on account of our limited capacities, it necessarily comes under three different definitions ; demonstrable truth, or that which can be brought under the cognizances of our own senses ; traditionary truth, or that which has been told us by others ; and imaginary truth, or that which we fancy to exist, or to have existed, in regions, or times, which are beyond the reach of demonstration.

Q. What is the chief characteristic of demonstrable truth ?

A. That it has remained the same in all ages, and in all countries. The impressions it makes, cannot be obliterated. Whenever it is known, it becomes self-evident and undisputed. It embraces every thing which is of any practical utility in promoting the welfare or happiness of mankind. It is always consistent with itself. It remains the same under every view or comparison of it, which can be taken or made ; and it can be completely separated from error without offending against the prejudices of any one, whenever individuals are still inclined to make the separation.

Q. What is the chief characteristic of traditionary and imaginary truth ?

A. The great facilities which they afford for forming a union with error, and the great difficulties which exist in the way of making a separation after this union is formed ; upon account of the absurd and irrational prejudices which have been forced upon the human mind in infancy—which lead the individuals to imagine that they have merit in believing inconsistencies, and that they will be punished if they doubt them.

Q. How can these prejudices be easiest overcome ?

A. Simply by ceasing to force upon the minds of infants any traditionary or imaginary doctrines which are at variance with demonstrable truth.

Q. Is the belief of such doctrines general ?

A. Every nation and country have been disputing, quarrelling, and fighting, about such doctrines, in all the bygone ages of the world.

Q. Why are all nations so earnest in impressing a belief of absurdities upon the minds of their infant children ?

A. Because they seem to be aware that such impressions can be made only while the mind is incapable of distinguishing truth from falsehood.

Q. Is it really the interest of children to be so trained ?

A. No—such treatment is illiberal, unjust, and barbarous. Illiberal, because it proceeds upon the principle that truth is not a match for error while both have fair play. Unjust, because it leads us to form a decision upon a disputed point, which decision in justice, is the birth-

right of another individual ; and barbarous because it leads us to destroy in infancy the intellects of our children.

Q. Can we perceive these absurdities in ourselves when we grow to manhood ?

A. Not easily ; because the prejudices of our education shut our eyes upon our own absurdities, and make us extremely averse to think or talk about them : while we can plainly see the absurdities of others, and can take pleasure in exposing them.

Q. Is it not a malicious pleasure which leads us to expose the absurdities of others ?

A. By no means ; because it is the real interest of every human being to renounce the belief of all absurdities.

Q. Do any individuals, or nations, believe themselves to be under the influence of absurd impressions ?

A. No ; it is impossible to do so ; because every human being, in every age of the world, has invariably considered his own impressions as the standard by which all others ought to be regulated ; consequently the mere circumstance of our thinking our own opinions right, is no proof that they are so.

Q. Then how can we ascertain our opinions are really correct ?

A. When our thoughts are concerning ourselves, we can ascertain whether we have had any traditionary or imaginary impressions forced upon our minds in infancy, which we are unwilling to examine, and to discuss with those who are of an opposite opinion. About which we feel any fear or anxiety. About which mankind quarrel, and dispute, and fight. For the belief or unbelief of which, reward is promised or punishment threatened. The belief of which is local and changeable. Confined to a certain period, or to a certain district ; for all these are uniformly the concomitants of error, and not of truth.

Q. How can we be sure that this is the case ?

A. We have sufficient evidence to convince us that this is the case, in so far as concerns the absurdities of other nations ; and we know that other nations are as thoroughly convinced in their opinion regarding the absurdity of many of our notions ; and we might also know, that the very idea of attaching merit, or demerit, to opinions which we hold or reject by necessity, and not by choice, is of itself extremely absurd.

Q. How ought we to proceed in order to gain a superiority over those who remain under the influence of absurd impressions ?

A. We ought to follow the course which we recommend to other benighted nations ; that is to submit to the most rigid scrutiny and investigation all our traditionary and imaginary impressions ; to compare them with the impressions which we have received by demonstrable truth ; and we ought to do this without fear or prejudice, in the full conviction that truth stands upon a foundation which can never to be shaken.

Q. Will such a mode of proceeding not be apt to efface some of the valuable impressions which have been made upon our minds in infancy ?

A. No—it will not ; because all impressions which are valuable are made by demonstrable truth, or are in unison with those which are so.

formed, and are altogether indelible. Such impressions can neither be obliterated, nor effaced, while life remains; and all the doctrines contained in the bible, which are of any practical utility in promoting the general happiness or welfare of mankind, are in complete unison with these impressions.

Q. Do atheists or unbelievers deny the truth, or dispute the utility of such doctrines?

A. No human being has ever openly denied or disputed the truth of such doctrines; they are so self-evident that they cannot be disputed. The doubts of unbelievers have been confined entirely to those portions of the bible which are at variance with existing facts, with the eternal and immutable laws of nature and of justice, or which are opposed to common decency.

Providence.—The Christians, it is well known, have no hesitation in acknowledging that their deity is divided into three infinite and distinct beings; but they have never as yet had the goodness to inform us exactly what it is that they call Providence; shall we, therefore, consider it as a being different from any of their three Gods; or shall we suppose that when they are speaking of Providence, they mean one of their Gods, or all of them? This Providence is always spoken of in such an ambiguous style, that we are totally unacquainted whether they mean one God, or all of them, or some different being. I have asked several Christians whether Providence was God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost, but I never as yet found any of them to give a sensible answer; and indeed, it is impossible for them to do so. In all these subjects they are obliged to talk in an inconsistent manner.

*** Miss Frances Wright will deliver a discourse on *Knowledge*, this evening, in the Masonic Hall, at seven o'clock. Admission free.

Free Press Association.—The regular monthly meeting takes place to-morrow, the 4th inst., in the lecture room, corner of Hester-st. and Bowery, at half-past ten o'clock, A. M. In the afternoon, a *theological* lecture will be delivered at three o'clock precisely.

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Whether a revelation by a supreme being has ever been made to man; and if so, what are the evidences?

But as the time would not permit all to be heard who might feel disposed to take part in the discussion, it was adjourned until to-morrow evening, to be resumed in the same place, (Marlborough hotel) at half past six o'clock.

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